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SCHAKOWSKY, CLINTON, SUNUNU, BURNS FIGHT TO PROTECT CHILDREN FROM UNSAFE CARS

BILL WOULD MANDATE CAR STANDARDS WHICH PROTECT KIDS FROM NON-CRASH RELATED ACCIDENTS

WASHINGTON, DC -- U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky, ranking member on the Subcommittee on Commerce, Trade, and Consumer Protection, today joined Senators Clinton, Sununu, and Burns as well as advocates and victims, for a press conference to discuss their legislation which would protect kids from unsafe cars. The Cameron Gulbransen Kids and Cars Safety Act, sponsored by Representatives Schakowsky and Peter King in the House, would set mandatory standards which would require auto manufacturers to better protect children from backover accidents, unsafe windows, and other hazards.

Representative Schakowsky's statement is below, as prepared for delivery:

I want to begin by thanking Kids and Cars and the Consumers Union for tirelessly advocating for the safety of children and for taking on the critical, mostly preventable problem of childhood injury or death resulting from unsafe cars.

I also want to thank Senators Clinton and Sununu, and Congressman King - who was unable to join us today. I am proud to be working with you in the fight for simple safety measures that will protect the lives of children. The bill we introduced in our respective chambers, the Cameron Gulbransen Kids and Cars Safety Act would mandate those standards.

Most of all, I want to thank the families who joined us today, for your courage to stand with us to help protect other families from the tragedy you have experienced. You set an example for us all by turning your heartbreak into action.

Unfortunately, your experiences are not unique. Four families each and every week last year lost a child to non-traffic, non-crash related accidents.

Many of them are killed without ever leaving their driveways - suffocated by power windows, backed over by cars, or because a car was accidentally put into motion by a child who could not control it.

In 2005, we lost more than 100 children to back-over accidents alone. The same was true in 2004.

The greatest tragedy is that these deaths are preventable - if car manufacturers do the right thing.

And passing our bill, the Kids and Cars Safety Act, would require them to do just that.

Fortunately, with the passage of last year's highway bill, H.R. 3, we got the ball moving for a number of safety provisions in our bill.

It will no longer be the job of Kids and Cars to estimate how many children are being hurt. The National Highway Safety and Transportation Administration will be taking over that task.

No longer will manufacturers be able to put power window switches in cars that make it easy for a child to be strangled by kneeling on an armrest.

And, NHTSA is going to be studying back-over prevention technologies to identify the most effective technologies for alerting drivers to that which they cannot see behind their cars.

Again, we need to go further. We need to make sure that power windows switches are safe, but we also need windows to auto-reverse if there is an obstruction.

We need to study back-over prevention, but we also need to require backward visibility standards.

And, we need a warning system to remind drivers if there is still someone in the backseat. Our bill would require these extra steps to protect our children from needless harm.

I want to put the cost per car of what we are talking about into perspective.

Brakeshift interlocks (to prevent unintentional rolling): \$5

Power window sensors: \$8-\$12

Back-over Warning Systems: \$300 (and this price will go down as they become standard)

Saving One Child's Life: Priceless